10— 3

ALUMNI LIBRARY,
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
PRINCETON, N. J.

Case,
Shelf,
Book,

10—3
7

SCC
8534

amuel Miller's Sermons

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY:

AN

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE,

DELIVERED

AT THE OPENING OF THE WINTER SESSION

OF THE

Theological Seminary

AT PRINCETON, NEW-JERSEY,

Nov. 9, 1827.

BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT IN THE SAID SEMINARY.

PRINCETON, N. J.

PRINTED BY D. A. BORRENSTEIN.

1827.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

At a meeting of the SOCIETY FOR INQUIRY ON MISSIONS, *composed of the students of the Theological Seminary, held on Saturday, the first of December, it was on motion unanimously*

RESOLVED,

That the Committee whose business it is to superintend the publications of this Society, request for publication a copy of your Lecture, delivered before the students of this Seminary, at the opening of the present Session.

In resolving to make this request, the Society were prompted by the conviction, that it will be found highly acceptable and useful, not only to those who are already "set for the defence of the Gospel," but to all who shall aspire to this responsible office, and instrumentally, through them, to the great body of the Church.

With sentiments of high esteem,

We remain,

Respectfully your's,

H. HOOKER,
J. K. CUNNINGHAM, } *COMMITTEE.*
D. T. WOOD,

Princeton,
Dec. 9, 1827.

Rev. Dr. Miller.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

&c.

BELOVED CANDIDATES FOR THE HOLY MINISTRY,

It is evident that Ministers of religion must have been coeval with the first acts of social worship. Long before the institution of the Levitical Priesthood, there were, undoubtedly, persons who "ministered in holy things," that is, who presided in offering sacrifices, and in conducting the exercises of public instruction and devotion. Even among the ante-diluvians, we read of those who "preached" and "prophesied" in the name of the Lord; and after the flood, before the commencement of the Mosaic dispensation, we find mention made of "*Melchisedeck, a priest of the most high God*;" and also of "*Jethro, a priest of Midian*," who was, evidently, a worshipper of Jehovah.

After the establishment of the Aaronick priesthood, the line was more distinctly drawn than ever between the ministers at the altar, and those in whose behalf they ministered. New barriers were raised against all unauthorized intrusion on the appropriate duties of the priestly office; and weighty and most momentous was the trust committed to

those who bore that office. When the New-Testament church was organized, the same general feature was impressed on this more spiritual dispensation. Still a class of men was set apart for the service of the sanctuary; and their essential functions, as before, appropriated to them alone. In several respects, indeed, did the ceremonial Priesthood differ from the New-Testament Ministry. The latter were no longer confined to a single family They were no longer called "priests;" but "ministers," "servants," "stewards of the mysteries of God," "ambassadors of Christ," &c. They were no longer distributed into several orders. And a variety of ceremonial observances relating to their qualifications, investiture, and succession, ceased to be obligatory.

Mr. *Gibbon*, indeed, asserts, that the distinction between "Clergy" and "Laity" was unknown in the primitive church, and was not introduced until the second century. If by this assertion he meant, that we do not find these precise terms, to distinguish between ecclesiastical men and others, in familiar use, in any christian writings earlier than those of *Tertullian*, *Origen*, and *Cyprian*; and, especially, that the proud and arrogant claims with which one of these terms was afterwards connected, were, before their time, in a great measure, unknown;—he is probable correct. But if his meaning be, that the Christian Ministry is not an institution of Jesus Christ; that he did not from the beginning, annex to it a specifick spiritual authority; that ministers were not, from the very origin of the church, desig-

nated by appropriate titles; that there were not appropriate functions assigned to them; and that these functions were not, in the primitive church, *confined* to them, but were common to all christians;—if this be his meaning, there could hardly be a statement more palpably erroneous;—a statement more unequivocally contradicted by the New-Testament itself, and all the most authentick records of early antiquity.

And, as the office of which we speak has, either substantially or formally, existed in all ages, so its object has been ever the same. Not to establish a set of "*lords over God's heritage*;" not to form a "privileged order" in the community; not to exercise a spiritual despotism over the understandings and consciences of men: not even to supersede the attention of men to their own spiritual interests; but to stimulate, to guide, and, in various ways, to assist them in this attention. Every private individual, indeed, is, of course, responsible for his own moral character. Every one who comes within the reach of the gospel, is to inquire, to believe, and to obey for himself, and for himself to receive the reward of his deeds; and if he neglect his duty, no diligence on the part of others can avail him. Yet, at the same time, every minister of religion is no less responsible for all the instructions which he gives, and for all his fidelity, or the want of it, in leading those around him into the way of truth and salvation. And if any perish through his unfaithfulness, "*their blood will be required at his hands.*"

My object, my beloved young friends, in the pre-

sent address, is to call your attention to THE UNSPEAKABLE IMPORTANCE OF THE SACRED OFFICE TO WHICH YOU ASPIRE; to show that the character of those who bear it, is vitally interesting to the Church of God; that whenever the Church is extended and built up, MINISTERS are instrumental in conferring the blessing; that whenever she is corrupted and degraded, MINISTERS are the guilty agents in accomplishing the mischief; and, in short, that WHAT MINISTERS ARE, THE CHURCH WILL ALWAYS BE.

This, I have no doubt, will appear if we consider,—

I. THE GREAT DESIGN OF THE OFFICE ITSELF. The importance of any institution is plainly to be measured by the *objects* which it is intended to promote; by the *purposes* which it is appointed and adapted to accomplish. Estimated by this standard, the importance of the Gospel Ministry is literally infinite. What is its great design? It is nothing less than to publish, explain, and recommend the Religion of Jesus Christ; to proclaim its glad tidings, and to extend its holy reign. But, is this religion of any real value to mankind? Is it of any importance that the children of men be instructed in the way of salvation; that they be brought under the genuine power of the Gospel; that their sins be pardoned; that their hearts be sanctified; that their evil habits be subdued; that their unhallowed affections and lusts be crucified; and that they be prepared for every holy duty and enjoyment here, and for eternal blessedness hereafter? Nothing can be plainer than that these are matters in compa-

rison with which all the temporal interests of men are as the small dust of the balance, weighed against the everlasting mountains. Yet these are the great matters about which Ministers of the Gospel are primarily and constantly conversant. The grand object of their commission is to turn men from darkness to light; from satan to God; from pollution, condemnation and misery, to purity, pardon and happiness; and finally to the enjoyment of an incorruptible crown, an undefiled inheritance, an exceeding and eternal weight of glory in the heavens.

It might be supposed, indeed, that a system so pure, reasonable and glorious as the Gospel of Jesus Christ, when once made known, would always be found to work its own way in the world, without the efforts of the living teacher to urge it on the attention and the consciences of men. But the word of God gives us no warrant to expect such a result, and all experience is equally against it. *The carnal mind is enmity against God. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness unto him.* So that, left to himself, no one would embrace or obey the Gospel. To say nothing, therefore, of the unnumbered millions of our world's population, who have never heard the Gospel, and who can never be expected to hear it "without preachers," Ministers may be said to be indispensable for maintaining the power of the Gospel, even where it is already established. To keep alive religion in the world; to prevent christian knowledge, publick worship, the Sabbath, and the various ordinances of social piety from utterly per-

ishing among men; in short, to preserve those who have enjoyed christianity from relapsing into real heathenism, it is necessary that ministers of religion be constantly employed to rouse men to a sense of their condition. It is necessary not only that the people be furnished with the written Word, but also with the living teacher, who shall, from sabbath to sabbath, and from house to house, bring their minds, if I may so express it, into contact with that Word, and constrain them to give it their serious and practical attention. It is necessary that they be called together, instructed warned, entreated, conjured, again and again, day by day, to attend to *the things which belong to their peace.* For nearly eighteen centuries, the standing means both of maintaining and extending the knowledge of Christ and his salvation in the world, has been the preaching of the Gospel. And without the use of this divine ordinance still, we have no reason to expect either that sinners will be converted, or saints edified and comforted. It is not, of course, meant to be intimated, either that no conversion is ever effected but by means of the authorized ministry; or that this ministry is ever made effectual by any virtue or power of its own. But the position meant to be maintained is, that God, in his sovereign wisdom, hath appointed and promised *by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe:* that consequently, on the one hand, where the Gospel is *not* preached, we have no reason to expect that the work of conversion and salvation will, to any extent, go forward; and that, on the other, where it *is* faithfully and ably dispensed, it will ge-

nerally be accompanied in a greater or less degree with a sanctifying and saving power.

Now, if these things be so, then it follows that the best interests of the community, and especially the vital interests of the church of God,—her orthodoxy, purity, life, peace, and enlargement, may be said to be SUSPENDED ON THE CHARACTER OF HER MINISTRY. Where there are *no* ministers, it is obvious that there can be no church, no organized, visible christianity. And where there *is* an existing ministry, it is equally evident that the church must, from the nature of things, bear the same character with those who are the appointed medium for conveying to her the aliment on which she lives, and the principles by which she is guided. If men be either not instructed at all, or taught erroneously, the consequences may be equally fatal. *If the blind lead the blind*, we know what infinite wisdom has told us will ensue. None under the name of ministers can hope to be instrumental in promoting the true welfare of men, but those who have both the ability and the disposition to lead them in the right way. If they be, generally, enlightened, fervently pious, and really faithful, not only in preaching the pure Gospel, but also in the discharge of all their public and private duties; true religion both in principle and practice, will be extensively understood, valued, and prevalent. But if, on the contrary, they be as a body, ignorant, unfaithful, erroneous in doctrine, or corrupt in practise; if they be proud, ambitious, worldly-minded, contentious, and negligent of the best interests of men; real religion

will as certainly be despised and decline, as any necessary effect will result from the presence of its cause. Nay, only let ministers be indolent, and forgetful of the great end and duties of their office, and spiritual desolation and death will as assuredly reign around them, as darkness will ensue in the absence of the solar rays. In short, if human nature be such as the Bible represents it,—earthly, sensual, proud, selfish, and backward to all that is spiritually good; if no other remedy than that which the Gospel furnishes, be either adapted or effectual to the healing of our moral disease; and if all scripture and all experience teach us that this remedy cannot be expected to display its healing power, any further than it is unremittingly exhibited and applied, by those who are appointed to execute this holy and benevolent office; then nothing can be plainer than that, if *they* be essentially deficient, either in orthodoxy, skill or fidelity, the moral pestilence which they are commissioned to cure, must rage with uncontrouled fury. It would require a constant course of miracles to prevent consequences the most disastrous from covering the face of society.

When we consider, moreover, that the publick preaching of the Gospel is almost the *only* means of instruction in morals and religion which a large portion of mankind enjoy; when we reflect that the minds of men, if not occupied with truth and holiness, will be unavoidably occupied with falsehood, with superstition, and with numberless forms of corruption; and when we remember, too, that the eyes of all, enemies as well as friends, are habitually

turned toward ministers of religion, either for the purpose of imitating their example, or of deriving from their delinquencies encouragement in infidelity and sin;—when these things are considered, surely it is not easy to overrate the importance of the sacred office to all the best interests of the church, and of mankind. Surely, it is of unspeakable, nay of infinite moment, that the man who undertakes to instruct his fellow men in the things of God, and salvation; who is, as it were, their mouth in speaking to God, and the mouth of God in speaking to them; who dispenses the sacraments to them and their children; who administers instruction and consolation to the sick and the dying; who undertakes, in a word, to be the teacher, the counsellor and the guide of his fellow sinners, in seeking temporal and eternal happiness;—surely it is of infinite importance that he who is charged with these high duties, should be wise, holy, faithful, diligent, self-denied, and exemplary. On his character and conduct, the interests of eternity as well as of time, are every hour suspended. A minister of religion cannot be a neutral or indifferent member of society. He will be a blessing or a curse wherever he is. And a blessing or a curse, in most cases, proportioned to the degree in which he is pious and faithful, or the reverse.

II. Let us next attend to some of the STATEMENTS OF SCRIPTURE ON THIS SUBJECT.

These correspond, most perfectly, with the foregoing representations:—importing, that when the spiritual guides of the people are wise and faithful, the church is always blessed; and that when they

are ignorant, selfish and corrupt, she never fails to suffer, and generally in direct proportion to the degree of their delinquency.

On the one hand, faithful ministers are PROMISED in scripture as a GREAT BLESSING, and their labours represented as a pledge of rich benefits, both temporal and spiritual. *I will give you pastors*, saith Jehovah, by the prophet, *after mine own heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and with understanding*. And again, by the same prophet, *I will set shepherds over them, which shall feed them.* And what is represented as the consequence to those who are thus fed? *They shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord.* And again, the great Head of the church, in describing that period when *Zion* shall eminently flourish, says, *I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace, day nor night:*—and concerning that period, he adds, *Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world,—Say ye to the daughter of Zion—Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah,* (that is—*My delight is in her), and thy land Beulah,* (that is—*Married); for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.**

On the other hand, the *unfaithfulness* of ministers is, every where, represented in scripture, not only

* Jeremiah iii. 15. xxiii. 4. Isaiah lxii. 4, 6, 11.

as an *aggravated sin;* but also as a source of *incalculable injury* to the *church*, and to all the interests of *social order.* The following specimen of inspired language on this subject, is of the most decisive character. *Thus saith the Lord, the Pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the Lord;* THEREFORE *they shall not prosper, and all* THEIR FLOCKS SHALL BE SCATTERED. *Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; for both prophet and priest are profane: they walk in lies;* THEY STRENGTHEN THE HANDS OF EVIL DOERS, *so that none doth return from his wickedness. Thus saith the Lord,* FROM THE PROPHETS IS PROFANENESS GONE FORTH INTO ALL THE LAND. *If they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they would have turned them from the evil of their doings. But they have caused my people to forget my name. Therefore, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord.* PASTORS HAVE DESTROYED MY VINEYARD; *they have trodden my portion under foot; they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds—Woe be to the shepherds of Israel, that do feed themselves. Should not the shepherds feed their flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool; ye kill them that are fat; but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that*

which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. Hear this, O ye priests, and hearken; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest unto me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. THERE SHALL BE LIKE PEOPLE, LIKE PRIEST; *and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them for their doings. Thus saith the Lord God, Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirits, and have seen nothing. O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. Therefore, thus saith the Lord, because they have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against them, saith the Lord God. Because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace, peace, when there was no peace: and one built up a wall, and lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar. Therefore, I will break down the wall, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. O ye priests, ye have departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law.* THEREFORE *have I made you contemptible before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways.**

It were easy to fill many pages with quotations from the Old Testament, which speak in a similar

* Jer. x. 18, 21. xii. 10. xxii. 9, 14, 15, 23, 27, 30. Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 3, 4, 5. Hosea, iv. 6, 9, 10. v. 1. Ezek. xiii. 4, 8, 9, 10. Malachi, ii. 8.

strain. And the same language is continued in the New Testament. There we read of "*false teachers;*" of teachers "*reprobate concerning the truth;*" of men who, by their false doctrines, and unhallowed practices, "*overthrew the faith*" of those around them; of men who "*sought their own, not the things which are Jesus Christs.*" And we are assured, that such, not only "*brought upon themselves swift destruction;*" but that "*many followed their pernicious ways,*" and that, on their account, "*the way of truth was evil spoken of.*" In short, in every part of scripture, we find error in doctrine, and corruption in practice, in the church, uniformly traced to the ignorance, unfaithfulness, or profligacy of those, whose office and whose duty it was to have been teachers and guides of the people. The language before quoted of the inspired prophet—"*like people, like priests,*" may be considered as an epitome of all the scriptural statements on this subject.

III. The great principle which it is my present object to establish, is further confirmed BY ALL THE ANALOGIES AND FACTS WHICH PERVADE EVERY SPECIES OF SOCIETY.

In the *family circle*—if the parents, the natural instructors and guides of youth, be ignorant, unprincipled, profane, or profligate; who does not expect, as a matter of course, to find the children walking in the same steps of ignorance, pollution and shame? And if they be found to possess the opposite character, who does not regard it as a kind of moral miracle? Nay, in the estimation of the wise, it is not necessary that a parent be profligate, in order to be

a curse to his children. Such is the tendency of human nature to sink down into darkness and ruin, that indolence alone, on his part, may effectually destroy them. Only let him entirely neglect their intellectual and moral culture, and he will probably train them up to be miserable vagabonds, a disgrace to himself, and the pests of society.

In like manner, in a *seminary of learning*; do we not always find the attainments and character of the *taught*, to bear a distinct proportion to those of the *teachers?* If those who occupy the place of instructors be grossly defective either in scholarship or diligence, who can reasonably suppose that they will succeed in the propagation of sound knowledge? If preceptors be ignorant, it were strange, indeed, to find their pupils well instructed. If those who are employed to cultivate the minds, and form the habits of the young, be incompetent to the discharge of their duties, and set an unworthy example, how can learning, and virtue, and order, be expected to reign among those committed to their care? As well might we expect darkness to beget light, or vice to propagate virtue. And if the degeneracy should become so wide-spread, as that the whole body of literary teachers in a country, at the same time, should be unqualified and unfaithful, would not the general interests of literature, necessarily, and as a matter of course, be every where utterly degraded? If the fountains be corrupt, the streams, surely, cannot be pure and salutary. It is impossible. What the former are, the latter will ever be.

The same principle applies to the *civil community.*

Legislators and magistrates give law to those around them, not only by official enactments, but also by their *example*, and by the incalculable power of their *influence*. When, therefore, they throw the whole weight of their example and influence, whatever may be their amount, into the scale of order, virtue, and true religion, the consequence is always happy. There never was an instance of this being thoroughly done, by leading men, as a body, without giving a tone to publick sentiment and practice of the most benign character. And, on the contrary, there never was an instance of their generally taking an opposite course, without producing effects of the most injurious kind on publick morals and happiness. If it be true, in every walk and connexion of life, that *one sinner destroyeth much good*; it is equally true, that one truly pious and exemplary man *produceth* much good. But when that sinner, or that pious man, holds a conspicuous and influential place in society, who can set bounds to the good or the evil which he may, and probably will, occasion? Every additional degree of elevation which he holds, or of influence which he possesses, will render him a greater blessing, or a heavier curse, each day that he lives. In a word, as the general character of the *Rulers* of a nation is, so will the nation itself certainly prove.

But if this principle apply to every other class of rulers and leaders among men, much more essentially and solemnly does it apply to ministers of the gospel. Because the great interests intrusted to their official administration, are infinitely more momentous than

the highest of those which secular men, as such, can ever pursue; because, in spiritual things, we stand in more pressing need of stimulants, and guidance, and aid, than in temporal pursuits; and because the consequences of the influence which ministers exert, and of the impressions which they make, not only affect this mortal life, but stretch into eternity. The highest object which kings, emperors, and legislators ever propose to themselves, in their fondest plans, is the advancement of population, wealth, external tranquillity, and temporal happiness. None of them ever sought the sanctification of the human heart, and the everlasting welfare of men, as the ultimate end of their plans. But the great end of that kingdom which faithful ministers recommend and promote, while it includes many subordinate benefits, is moral and eternal blessedness. Of this kingdom alone it may be said, that *it is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.* And to him alone who is immediately instrumental in saving or destroying a soul, do the highest responsibilities attach of which man is capable. When other leading men in the community act their part, they will, no doubt, exert some degree of influence on the moral as well as the secular interests of men; but the activity of ministers of the gospel is primarily destined to affect, and, to the whole extent of its influence, *does* affect the spiritual and eternal interest of all within the sphere of their ministrations.—I have only to add—

IV. That all these reasonings ARE ABUNDANTLY CONFIRMED BY THE VOICE OF HISTORY.

The direct declarations of Scripture on the general truth before us, have been already considered. Its historical information is equally striking and decisive. Search the inspired history, from beginning to end, and you shall find, that just in proportion as ministers of religion were enlightened and holy, faithful and diligent, the purity and prosperity of the church were established. Whether during the Patriarchal or Mosaick dispensations; whether under judges or kings, it was ever the same. Wherever the spiritual instructors and guides were sound and devoted men, religion, in a considerable degree, flourished; truth was maintained; idolatry was frowned upon; and order and happiness abounded. And whenever God, after long spiritual declension among his people, intended mercy for them, and a happy revival in their bondage, we never find Him accomplishing his purpose by miracle, but always by the use of human instruments, and generally by his commissioned servants. He seldom failed to raise up able and devoted men to enlighten, reform and sanctify the people. But whenever the prevailing character of those who bore the sacred office became corrupt, a scene the sad reverse of all this was disclosed on every side. Truth and justice were trodden down in the streets. Divine institutions were dishonoured. Idolatry lifted its head. And publick profligacy and misery followed in its train. This was so steadily the course of things throughout the whole of the Old-Testament economy, that to quote all the examples of it on record, would be to repeat the greater part of the Jewish scriptures. On the

one hand, the revivals of religion which occurred repeatedly, under the auspices of faithful men, raised up by God for the purpose, in the time of the Judges, and afterwards in the time of *Ezra*, of *Nehemiah*, and of the *Asmonean* witnesses of the truth: and, on the other hand, the pernicious influence of unsanctified teachers, from time to time; the conduct of *Hophni* and *Phinehas*, who, by their unworthy conduct, *caused the people to despise the offerings of the Lord;* the conduct of the sons of *Samuel*, who became sources of deep corruption and disaffection among the people; and the deplorable spirit, habits, and influence of the Priests and Scribes, before the captivity, after the captivity, and during our Lord's ministry on earth,—all bear witness to the correctness of the principle which I am endeavouring to establish.

When the New-Testament church was set up under a more spiritual form, the ministers commissioned to go forth, and preach the Gospel, with *Paul* at their head, were men, we know, of a peculiarly devoted spirit. They were endowed not only with extraordinary gifts, but also with large measures of grace They meddled not with the kingdoms of this world. They aspired to no earthly distinctions. They employed no "carnal weapons." They undertook not to be "judges or dividers" among the people. But setting ONE OBJECT alone before them —the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, in all its simplicity and purity, they pursued that object with zeal, with indefatigable labour, and with unceasing prayer, day and night; "giving themselves

wholly" to their work; shrinking from no privation; intimidated by no danger; *counting all things but loss for the excellency of Christ;* and not regarding *even their lives as dear to them, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus.* How striking the delineation of the character, and the narrative of the ministry of these holy men! What sacred elevation of sentiment and affection! What zeal! What humility! What disinterestedness! What abstraction from the pleasures and honours of the world! What devotedness to their Master's glory, and to the salvation of souls! What unwearied labour in preaching and instructing from house to house! What holiness of example "in all manner of conversation."!

And what were the EFFECTS of the ministrations of such men? The most decisive and happy. The Lord followed their labours with an abundant blessing. More was done in the propagation of the genuine Gospel, during the first century, than in any other, from that period to the present hour. None of those devoted missionaries laboured in vain. *The word of the Lord had free course, and was glorified. Much people were added to the Lord.* As long as the ministers of Christ maintained this character, not all the wisdom of "Philosophy falsely so called;" not all the frowns of an anti-christian government; nay, not all the terrors of martyrdom, could obstruct the course of the new and heaven-born system which they taught. Though they were persecuted from city to city; persecuted to prison and to death; *hated of all men, and their names cast forth as vile,* for

the sake of the holy and gracious message which they proclaimed; still that message went on "conquering and to conquer." *Great multitudes believed and were added to the Lord, both men and women: And the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly; and great companies became obedient to the faith. And the churches had rest and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.* Nor was this the case merely in *Judea*, in *Samaria*, and in *Galilee*, but also in *Syria*, in *Asia-Minor*, in *Rome*, in *Greece*, and, indeed, throughout the greater part of the known world.

It is not denied, indeed, that in several of the churches of which we have accounts, during the lives of these devoted ministers of Christ, we read of dissensions arising, of false doctrines being introduced, and of corrupt practices gaining ground. But, while we admit that the apostles were not perfect, more than other men; and that, as long as human beings preach, and administer the affairs of the church, some degree of imperfection may be expected to mark every work and society with which they are connected; still it may be confidently asserted, that the difficulties and corruptions which arose in the apostolick churches, were in no wise inconsistent with the doctrine which I maintain. For, in every instance in which heresy, division, or immoral practices marked the character of any church in the apostle's days, it was, evidently, the work of WEAK OR WICKED MINISTERS; of false apostles, judaizing teachers, or men otherwise unsound and unfaithful; who, coming in, brought

with them error, strife, and every evil work. I cannot recollect a single exception to this statement. Corrupt occupants of the sacred office, or miserable pretenders to that office, were always the authors of the mischief.

In the second and third centuries, we mark a gradual, but very distinct and melancholy decline, both in faith and practice, throughout the whole church. And when we carefully scrutinize the causes, as well as the circumstances of this decline, it is impossible not to consider it as connected with a corresponding decline in the character of the Clergy. When *Justin Martyr*, *Clemens of Alexandria*, and *Origen*, together with other ministers, whose taste and character they became instrumental in perverting, had tarnished the simplicity and purity of the Gospel; they opened the way for more mischief in the church of God, than, with all their learning they were able to estimate, or, with all their good intentions, to counteract. The following strong picture from the pen of *Cyprian*, will show that there was at that time clerical degeneracy enough to account for all the corruption, in doctrine and practice, which then existed, or which soon followed.

"A long continuance of peace and security had relaxed the rigour of that holy discipline which was delivered to us from above. THE RELIGION OF THE CLERGY SLACKENED AND DECAYED; the faith of priests and deacons grew languid and inactive; works of charity were discontinued; AND AN UNIVERSAL LICENSE AND CORRUPTION PREVAILED. Divers bishops, who should have taught both by their exam-

ple and persuasion, neglecting their high trust, and their commission from above, entered upon the management of secular affairs, and leaving their seat, and their charge with it, wandered about, from place to place, on mercantile business, and in pursuit of disreputable gain. Thus the poor of the church were miserably neglected, while the bishops, who should have taken care of them, were intent upon nothing but their own private profit, which they were forward to advance at any rate, and by any, even the foulest methods."*

Origen speaks of the clergy of his day, in language no less pointed and revolting. "If Christ," says he, "justly wept over *Jerusalem*, He may now, on much better grounds, weep over the church, which was erected to the end that it might be an house of prayer; and yet, through the filthy usury of some (and I wish that these were not even THE PASTORS OF THE PEOPLE) it is made a den of thieves."†

Eusebius, who lived in the next century, writes in the same strain concerning the age of *Cyprian*. "When, through too much liberty, we fell into sloth and negligence; when every one began to envy and backbite another; when we waged, as it were, an intestine war amongst ourselves, with words as with swords; *pastors* rushed against *pastors*, and people against people, and strife and tumult, deceit and guile advanced to the highest pitch of wickedness. —Our pastors, despising the rule of religion, strove mutually with one another, studying nothing more

* *De Lapsis*. Sect. 4. † *In Matt.* p. 441

than how to outdo each other in strife, emulations, hatred, and mutual enmity; proudly usurping principalities, as so many places of tyrannical domination. THEN THE LORD COVERED THE DAUGHTER OF ZION WITH A CLOUD IN HIS ANGER."*

If such were the character of the clergy in the days of *Origen* and *Cyprian*, we have, surely, no reason to wonder at the deep degeneracy, both in doctrine and morals, which all the records of that time show to have begun in every part of the church, and which prepared the way for the still deeper degeneracy which marked the succeeding age. The teachers and leaders of the church, as a body, were no longer faithful; and it would have been miraculous, indeed, if the church herself had remained pure and harmonious.

In the fourth century, when Christianity became, for the first time, the established religion of the Roman Empire, both the causes and the symptoms of spiritual corruption, became, every where, more prevalent, and more strongly marked. And the first and most prominent fact which strikes us, in the gloomy scene which followed is, the DEGENERACY OF THE CLERGY. Christ's kingdom is not of this world. Of course, the moment the church becomes united with the civil government, under whatever form, she suffers a kind of spiritual prostitution, which is invariably productive of both pollution and degradation. When *Constantine* professed to be a convert to the religion of Christ, (and he was, probably, never more than a mere worshipper in the

* *Hist. Eccles.* Lib. viii. cap. 1.

"outer court" of the Christian temple) he immediate began to bestow upon its institutions and ministers all the splendour of imperial munificence. The emperor, and his subordinate officers, courted and flattered the clergy ; and the clergy, in their turn, courted and flattered the great men of the empire ;—sought their smiles ;—accepted secular endowments with greediness ;—were found in places at court ;—and became the sycophants and tools of men in power. Their suppleness, luxury, unhallowed emulations, and consequent unfaithfulness, led, as might have been expected, to a corresponding character among the body of visible christians. Again the Old Testament adage, "LIKE PRIEST, LIKE PEOPLE," became unhappily and signally realized. The church exchanged the simplicity of truth, and the beauty of holiness, for the habiliments of secular splendour. And then set in that full tide of corruption in doctrine, order and morals, which, after receiving one serious check in the time of *Augustine*, soon issued in the Papal apostacy ; and transformed the chaste Virgin, as left by our Lord and his Apostles, into the "Mother of harlots and abominations."

During the dark ages, the general character of the clergy was such as we might suppose likely to produce, and be produced by, the character of the church. Ignorant, voluptuous, ambitious, contentious, and profligate, as the great body of them were, to an almost incredible degree, they continually shed a baleful influence all around them ; and, instead of being teachers of truth and purity, and guides to heaven : they became, every where, instructors in

the most childish superstitions, panders to lust, and ringleaders in all wickedness. If truth, and decency, and, especially, any thing like christian character existed any where, they were sure to be found in the respective neighbourhoods of some pious ministers of Christ, scattered here and there, who, like glimmering stars in a dark night, were lighting a few humble souls to glory.

Time would fail me in entering into those minute details of historical induction which serve to illustrate and confirm our general position. But, if I mistake not, the further we penetrate into the recesses of ecclesiastical history, the more numerous and glaring will be found to be the facts, which establish, not only the *reality*, but also the *importance* of the doctrine which it is my aim to impress upon your minds.

Who were the authors of ninety-nine parts out of an hundred, of that enormous mass of superstition, which now forms, and has for ages formed, the contents of that Augean stable, which the inspired apostle styles "the Man of sin, the son of perdition?" Beyond all controversy, ECCLESIASTICKS—ignorant, deluded, vain, or profligate ECCLESIASTICKS.

With whom have originated all the *heresies*, which, from the birth of Christ, to this hour, have corrupted and divided the church, and given rise to some of her most fearful calamities? In almost every instance their authors have been ECCLESIASTICKS —philosophical or ambitious ECCLESIASTICKS.

Who have created the most mischievous *parties* and *schisms*, which have distracted and torn the bo-

dy of Christ; alienated his ministers from each other; and filled christendom with the most bitter and unrelenting warfare? A regard to truth still constrains me to say, that selfish, proud, turbulent Ecclesiasticks have been the ringleaders in all the mischief.

Who have been, in almost all cases, the haughty and cruel *persecutors* of the meek, pious, and faithful witnesses of the truth? Who have been most active in conducting those *of whom the world was not worthy*, to prison and to death, for their fidelity to God and his people? It is painful to repeat the sentence;—but it is impossible to avoid still saying—Ecclesiasticks.

Who can take the most cursory glance at the ecclesiastical history of *Great Britain*, in the seventeenth century, without perceiving how possible, nay, how easy it is for a bigoted, proud, and worldly clergy to destroy, in a few years, the spirituality of a church, to banish her most faithful ministers, and to cover her with darkness and desolation? And who can study, ever so slightly, the rise, progress, and disasters of the French *Huguenots*, so conspicuous, at one period, among the pious followers of the Lamb, without being convinced that the gradual departure of their Ministry from the doctrines and spirit of the Reformation, was the principal means of drawing down upon them those awful judgments, by which a righteous God was pleased to reduce and scatter them, and from which they have never recovered to the present day?

On the contrary; who have been chiefly instru-

mental, under the divine blessing, in accomplishing all the *happy Reformations* which have, at any time, blessed the church? Who have been instrumental in forming new and thriving congregations; in restoring weak and declining ones; in healing ecclesiastical divisions; in promoting happy revivals of religion; in transforming an ignorant, unpolished, and heathen population, into an enlightened, orderly, and pious community; in raising the standard of intellect; in promoting the growth of knowledge; in encouraging and regulating the education of youth; in diffusing a spirit of sound morality; in teaching men the rights of conscience, and extending a love of civil and religious liberty;—in a word, in promoting the reign of truth, order, and happiness, in Church and State? To these questions, if I mistake not, the voice of history returns a very unequivocal response. In particular, the more closely you scrutinize the history of the *Waldenses* and *Albigenses*, in remoter periods; and of the Protestant churches of *England*, *France*, *Geneva*, *Germany*, *Holland*, *Scotland*, and *New England*, in more modern times, the more clearly you will find them to speak a language in perfect harmony with the great principle which I maintain: viz. THAT NO CHURCH WAS EVER RUINED, OR ESSENTIALLY INJURED, BUT BY HER OWN MINISTERS: OR SIGNALLY BLESSED, BUT THROUGH A REVIVAL OF THEIR ZEAL AND FIDELITY.

If the foregoing representation be correct, then we may infer,

1. That the Ministerial Office is the most INTE-

resting, the most responsible, the most awful under heaven. Every minister of the gospel bears a resemblance to his Master in this respect, that he is *set for the rise and fall of many in Israel.* What he is, the portion of the church with which he is connected, will probably be. Most other men may go through life without exerting such a vital influence, both for time and eternity. But on *his* character, example, spirit, and preaching are continually suspended the everlasting realities of salvation or perdition, and that to an extent which no human arithmetick can calculate. He does not deliver a sermon, or take a step, or live an hour, which may not take hold of heaven or hell. To him the "ark of God" is committed, and an unhallowed touch may draw down destruction, not only on himself, but on thousands. Can a candidate for the ministry think of this, and not tremble? Is not this a charge weighty enough, and momentous enough in its consequences, to make even an angel tremble? No wonder that some great and good men have shrunk from the thought of accepting this office out of pure conscientiousness. And, let me add, that *that* youth who, in contemplating this office, does not look forward to it with a sacred awe; who does not sit down, and solemnly "count the cost" of his undertaking; and, while he reposes with confidence in the power and faithfulness of his God, does not often ask himself, with the most tender and prayerful solicitude—*Who is sufficient for these things?* —discovers but little acquaintance either with his own heart, or with the magnitude and awfulness of

the trust which he seeks. But, while I say this, in fidelity to you, my young friends, I must also, in fidelity to my Master, say—Let no young man who sincerely loves Christ and the souls of men; who earnestly desires the gospel ministry; and to whom the great Head of the church opens the regular door of entrance into the office;—let no *such* young man say,—"The work is so awful, that I dare not venture upon it." Of every such youth it may be said, "*The Lord hath need of him*:" and for discharging the duties of this high trust, he may safely cast himself on the power and grace of Him who said concerning his ministers—*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*

2. From the view which has been taken of this subject we may infer, how VARIOUS, EXTENSIVE, AND DIFFICULT OF ATTAINMENT, are the QUALIFICATIONS which fit any man to be useful, and, especially, in any eminent degree, useful, in the ministerial office! —The man who undertakes to instruct hundreds, and, perhaps, thousands, of the learned as well as the ignorant, in the most important of all knowledge:—the man who offers himself as an expounder of the Bible, the most difficult book, in some respects, in the world, to be understood and explained:—the man who proposes to act as a spiritual guide to immortal souls; to enlighten the perplexed; to counsel the tempted; to satisfy the doubting; to silence the bold and literary infidel; to refute the learned and ingenious heretick; and to stop the mouth of the artful caviller:—the man who undertakes to be a *watchman on the walls of Zion*, to discern when dan-

ger is approaching; to estimate its nature and magnitude, and to give warning accordingly:—the man, in a word, who is preparing to go forth into the church, and the world, as an adviser, a guide, and a helper in all that is good; as a centre of light, and counsel, and instruction, and consolation, and holy activity to thousands;—surely such a man ought to have many qualifications which do not belong, and are not necessary, to common christians. What various, and extensive knowledge; especially, what familiar acquaintance with scripture; what deep and ardent piety; what prudence; what knowledge of the world and of the human heart; what command of his own spirit; what zeal; what patience; what capacity for labour; what diligence; what perseverance, are indispensable here! That no man without UNFEIGNED AND EVEN ARDENT PIETY ought to engage in the duties of this office, is conceded, even by those who have no piety themselves. But there may be truly pious men, who are, nevertheless, totally unqualified for the ministerial work. No ignorant man; no strikingly weak man; no imprudent man; no habitually indolent man; no rash, headstrong, turbulent, contentious man, is fit to be a minister, even if we could suppose him to have the piety of an angel.

3. From the representation which has been given, we may infer, that candidates for the holy ministry OUGHT TO BE IN NO HASTE TO TERMINATE THEIR PREPARATORY STUDIES, AND TO ENTER ON THE ACTIVE DUTIES OF THE SACRED OFFICE. When we reflect on the various attainments and qualifications

which are indispensable to the able and faithful discharge of ministerial duties; how much digested knowledge, sacred and profane; how much christian experience; how much familiarity with christian casuistry; how much self command; and what long and unwearied labour is to be gone through, not only in storing the mind and the heart with all requisite ministerial furniture; but also in forming such *habits* and *manners* as shall be adapted to promote official usefulness.—When we reflect on this, it appears equally wonderful and humiliating, that any candidate for the sacred office should imagine that he can be prepared for the pulpit, and the pastoral charge, in a few brief months after commencing his professional studies! It is difficult to conceive of more deep delusion. Does not the apostle expressly prohibit laying hands on a "novice?" And what is a "novice," but one who labours under that deficiency in knowledge and practical experience which usually characterizes a recent convert?—It is impossible for any man, whatever may be his talents, to acquire, in so short a time, the requisite amount of various knowledge. But even if he *could* do this, still he ought to be deterred from contenting himself with so hasty and compendious a course. For he has much to gain besides mere knowledge, and much that requires time, toil, and conflict. He is called to study his own heart; to ascertain his own defects and foibles; to discipline his own feelings and habits; to study clerical character, under its various aspects, as it *is*, and as it *ought* to be; to become acquainted with the state, and the wants of

the church; and, in a word, to lay a deep and broad foundation for every superstructure of intellectual, moral, and spiritual attainment, which it is his duty to raise.

You, no doubt, remember, that the Priests, under the Old Testament dispensation, were not permitted to enter on the publick duties of their office, until they had reached the age of thirty years. I will not say, that, under the New Testament economy, we ought to be rigidly governed by the same rule. But I can by no means regard with approbation the conduct of some modern candidates for the sacred office, who have prematurely pressed into the pulpit, at the age of twenty, or twenty-one, after an extremely hurried and imperfect course of study. I will only say, that, in ordinary cases, nothing can justify such presumptuous haste. No young man, unless his circumstances be very peculiar, ought ever to be licensed to preach the gospel under twenty-four, or twenty-five years of age; or to be ordained to the work of the ministry under twenty-six, or twenty-eight. Men seldom have, at an earlier age, that deep, steady, enlightened piety; that amount of christian experience; that maturity of judgment; that established gravity and prudence; that acquaintance with men and manners, and those stores of practical wisdom, which are so desirable, even in the first acts of evangelical and pastoral duty. Many a juvenile candidate for the sacred office has entered on his publick duties so strikingly deficient in knowledge, in maturity of judgment, and in practical experience, as to draw a heavy cloud, not only over the outset,

but also over the whole course of his professional life. To this source, I have no doubt, we may trace many of those personal indiscretions and theological and ecclesiastical vagaries, which have destroyed the usefulness of many a young minister. To this source, also, we may trace the early decline of popularity, and the disreputable dismission of many a promising young pastor, who, with all his sprightliness and confidence, never had a stock of knowledge adequate to the demands of the stated ministry To this we must ascribe the poor, jejune, and unprofitable preaching of hundreds, who maintain their places, and wear the clerical garb. And to this, among other things, we may refer the rashness, and the melancholy triumph of zeal, over knowledge and wisdom, in undertaking to guide the interests of religion, in times of extraordinary awakening and revival. The naratives of the unscriptual devices, and unskilful management of ministers, pious, indeed, but totally lacking in information, experience, and mature wisdom, form some of the most melancholy pages in the history of the church.

4. If the doctrine on which I have been insisting be correct, then, HOW GREAT IS THE GUILT OF UNFAITHFUL MINISTERS! He who has taken on himself the vows, and all the tremendous responsibilities of this office; and yet, from indolence, or from spiritual indifference, neglects the souls committed to his charge:—or, from a desire to please, flatters and deceives them in the great concerns of salvation;—"daubing with untempered mortar," and crying, "peace, peace, when there is no peace;"—incurs a

degree of guilt which it is impossible to express or measure. We speak of the thief, the murderer, and the perjured person, in civil life, with abhorrence; but what is their guilt, when compared, in the light of God's word, with that of the unfaithful minister? The one robs his fellow men of a portion of perishing wealth;—the other robs them of all that is precious in the hopes of the soul. The one "kills the body, and after that, has no more that he can do:—but under the murderous hand of the other, the immortal spirit dies, and is plunged into the abyss of the damned. The one tramples on a solemn appeal to God about some temporal trifle;—the other daily violates oaths and vows which have for their object the "Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," and all the mighty interests of thousands throughout an unwasting eternity. A wicked minister is the most wicked of all men. His sins are more extensively and permanently mischievous than those of other men. He sins against greater light, and stronger obligations, and more solemn engagements than other men. And, therefore, it appears to me highly probable, that the lowest depths in the prison of eternal despair, are occupied by unprincipled, unfaithful ministers. And, let me ask—Is not this peculiar guilt likely to rest with especial weight on such unprincipled and unfaithful ministers *as hold an orthodox creed*, and go down to perdition *from orthodox churches?* Surely those whose theory is most spiritual; whose profession is most strict; and whose excitements to fidelity are most solemn, incur a proportional degree of guilt in setting them

all at naught. If this suggestion be well founded, there are, probably, no men on earth, at this hour, whose situation is more responsible, and who are called upon more deeply to ponder it in their hearts, than the ministers, and candidates for the ministry, of the Presbyterian Church in the *United States.*

5. In the light of this subject we may see why it is, THAT THE CLERGY HAVE BEEN SO MUCH DESPISED, AND MADE THE OBJECTS OF SO MUCH CONTEMPTUOUS SNEER, IN ALL AGES, BY INFIDELS AND WORLDLY MEN. That assailing, and endeavouring to depreciate the character of ministers, has long been a favourite method of attacking christianity itself, both on the part of some who professed to believe it, as well as of open infidels, is well known. The unfairness of this method of attack is, indeed, manifest. The *Bible* is our rule of faith and practice ; not the character of those who undertake to expound and publish it. Still, however plain, and however reasonable this distinction, it is often entirely overlooked. Religion always has been, and ever will be, to a great extent, judged of by her ministers. And, alas! that they have, in so many instances, given occasion to the enemy to "speak reproachfully!" Among the many millions of ministers who have officiated in the sanctuary since the establishment of a visible church on earth, how large a number, with the language of holy exhortation on their lips, have been grossly immoral! How many more, while directing the attention of others to a better world, have manifested that they were selfish, worldly minded, and supremely devoted to the ambitious pursuits of

the present life! O how small has been the proportion in any age or country, who have preached and lived as if they really believed the great things which they professed to be desirous of inculcating on those around them! The truth is, THE GREAT BODY OF THE CLERGY HAVE NEVER ACTED IN CHARACTER; AND, THEREFORE, NO WONDER THEY HAVE BEEN TREATED WITH CONTEMPT AND RIDICULE. It is not in the nature of things that men so inconsistent, should be really respected in their official character. Worldly men sometimes, indeed, honour ministers, who have little apparent piety, for their talents, their learning, or their attractive social qualities: but they seldom fail to discern their official defects, and, no doubt, are often hardened by them in unbelief and impiety. I freely grant, indeed, that if ministers were heavenly purity itself embodied, infidels and worldly men would dislike and malign them. When Infinite Purity was "manifest in the flesh," they *did* cry out, "Crucify him, crucify him." Still, however, there is such a thing as the apostle speaks of, when he exhorts *Timothy*, by *well doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* Blessed be God! it has been often done; and we may hope, that, through his grace, it will be still more frequently done hereafter. If the ministerial character were presented under its genuine, scriptural, and primitive aspect, it would extort a reluctant homage, even from the most abandoned votaries of sin. Only let ministers lay aside all worldly policy and habits; let them demonstrate by their conduct that their treasures are in heaven; let them show, by their

simple scriptural piety, their zeal, humility, purity, meekness, self-denial, and deadness to the world, that the imitation of Christ is their habitual study, and doing good their "ruling passion;" and we shall soon cease to hear of the charge of "priestcraft," and the sneer, that "the clergy of all religions are alike." Too much "alike," a great majority of them have, indeed, been, in selfishness, indolence, and unfaithfulness to their trust! But the purity of the Divine Word, and the glorious beauty of the Spirit of Christ, by which they professed to be guided, have been ever the same. A sufficient number, too, have been really guided by them, to show that, amidst a multitude of counterfeits, there has been much true coin. And the time is coming when the clerical character shall be, every where, so much in harmony with the spirit of the Bible, as to redeem itself from every reproach, and to be universally acknowledged as a blessing to the world.

6. We may see, from this subject, WHY THERE IS SO LITTLE TRULY GOOD AND PROFITABLE PREACHING. An anonymous writer, in a late number of a distinguished foreign journal, remarks, that "the eloquence of the pulpit, generally speaking, turns very peculiar advantages to a very moderate account." Although I have no doubt that my estimate of true excellence in gospel preaching, would be found to differ greatly from that of the writer in question; yet the remark just quoted, however humiliating, is, doubtless, founded in fact. Considering the amount of preaching; and considering, too, the scope, the subjects, the opportunities of leisurely

preparation, the excitements, and the almost unlimited field of usefulness, furnished to the christian preacher, I do think the examples of high excellence, and of extensive benefit, in this department of exertion, are wonderfully few and small, compared with what might be reasonably expected. It is by no means a sufficient answer to this complaint, to say, that great talents are extremely rare; and that a very high grade of eloquence, in any profession, is still more rare. This is, no doubt, true. And if distinguished genius, and first-rate eloquence, measured by the precepts of *Cicero*, *Longinus*, or *Quintilian*, were necessary to form a good preacher; the great majority of clerical men might hold themselves guiltless in being very inferior preachers. But these, however desirable and useful in their place, are far from being necessary, to great excellence, and eminent usefulness in gospel preaching. A man of enlightened, fervent piety, medium talents, and mature biblical and theological furniture, may preach well;—sufficiently well to be a rich blessing to any community. There is not one of you, my young friends, who, if his heart were warmed and elevated as it ought to be, with living, active piety, and if he took suitable pains to store his mind with appropriate knowledge, might not be a preacher of great excellence, and of extensive usefulness. The fire of zeal would supply the lack of artificial refinements, and pour forth a constant stream of eloquence, irregular, perhaps, and plain, but truly sanctified, feeling, and, therefore,

impressive in its character. The true reason, then, why we have so little good and profitable preaching, is, that, among those who attempt to perform this service, there is so little deep, warm, heart-felt piety; and so little of that patient, indefatigable labour, to store the mind with knowledge, and to attain an easy, natural, forcible method of communicating it, which are within the reach of most ordinary minds, supremely intent on doing good. Some of the most useful preachers that ever entered the pulpit, have been men not at all distinguished either for great genius, profound learning, or striking elocution. But they never failed to be distinguished for good sense, christian prudence, fervent love for their Master's cause, and for immortal souls, and untiring perseverance in holy labour. And, rely upon it, whoever will steadfastly exhibit these, in any church or country, will attain high excellence, and great acceptance and usefulness as a gospel preacher.

7. From what has been said, it is evident, that, while we greatly need a much larger number of ministers; WE STILL MORE URGENTLY NEED AN INCREASE IN MINISTERIAL PIETY, ZEAL, AND FIDELITY. That there is a real, nay, a most distressing deficiency in the *number* of labourers employed in the "great harvest," in almost every part of our country, every well-informed person knows to be a fact. Taking into view the missionary, as well as the pastoral service, it is probably safe to affirm, that if we had a thousand able and faithful men, added, at once, to our present number of ministers, they

might all be usefully employed. This, I am aware, is doubted by some, because they, now and then, find a candidate for pastoral settlement, or for some other branch of evangelical service, unemployed. But the inference drawn from this fact is, undoubtedly, delusive. May it not be said of a *portion* of these unoccupied candidates, that they are NOT WORTH EMPLOYING? That they are so strikingly deficient in the most important qualifications as to be little if any better than none? And of the *rest*, that they are not willing to go where they are pressingly invited, and greatly needed? But if some, evidently wanting in the furniture requisite for instructing and edifying the people; and others, not willing to labour where they are called, are standing idle; does either case afford evidence that able, willing, and faithful labourers, and even large additional numbers of them, are not greatly needed? Certainly not. Every enlightened friend of religion, then, will pray without ceasing that MORE LABOURERS may be raised up, qualified, and thrust forth into the harvest. But the friends of piety ought to pray still more earnestly, that all who are sent forth may be of the RIGHT STAMP. It is unspeakably more important that ministers be men of the PROPER SPIRIT, than that they be VERY NUMEROUS. Many people appear to speak and act as if it were desirable to obtain a large number of ministers of almost *any sort*. But, truly, this is a great mistake. Of what advantage is it to any church to add to her ministry a drone, an ignoramus, or a learned formalist? A thousand such additions to her clerical ranks

would do her no good. *Good* did I say? The more such ministers are multiplied, the worse it is for the church They draw down upon her blasting and desolation, rather than a blessing. What the church needs is a greater number of pious, humble, enlightened ministers, who *know how* to labour, and who *love* to labour, for Christ, and for immortal souls. One such man as *Brainerd*, or *Whitefield*, or *Tennent*, or *Martyn*, is worth fifty, or a hundred of your cold, timid, indolent men, although they go through a formal round of duties, without any disreputable deficiency, and preach the truth, and nothing but the truth, every time they enter the sacred desk. One such man as the apostle *Paul*, has been, and may be again, the means of regenerating a nation: while scores or hundreds of men calling themselves ministers, but either bloated by sacerdotal pride, or paralized by frigid indifference, may slumber through their miserable routine for years, without witnessing the regeneration of a single soul.

8. We may learn, from what has been said, WHAT THAT KIND OF HONOUR IS TO WHICH MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL OUGHT TO ASPIRE. Clergymen, in all ages and countries, have unhappily degraded their office, while they intended to "magnify" it. They have sought wealth, or secular station, or affected splendour in living, or courted the patronage of great men, or aspired to high rank in the walks of literature, or, if no more elevated honours were within their reach, to occupy "the uppermost rooms at feasts," to receive "greetings in the markets," and "to be called of men, *rabbi*, *rabbi*." Need I say, that all

these will be regarded by an "ambassador of Christ," who has the genuine spirit of his office, and who wishes, with *Paul*, to "magnify it," in reality, as infinitely beneath his "sanctified ambition?" That illustrious gospel hero, *Martin Luther*, was accustomed to say—"God will sometimes endure a love of worldly honour in Lawyers and Physicians; but in ministers of the gospel he will in no case endure it." Let this sentiment "sink down into your hearts," with the weight of an incontrovertible maxim. History has, undoubtedly, set upon it the stamp of truth. Every effort that ministers make in secular aspirings, and every step they gain in secular greatness, though it may not bring upon them the visible judgments of the Almighty, will assuredly diminish their zeal, reputation, and usefulness, in the sacred office: and, if indulged to a considerable extent, will effectually destroy them all. The true honour of a minister of reconciliation lies in possessing all the qualifications proper for his official work, and in devoting them supremely and unceasingly to the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. The servant of Christ never miscalculates more egregiously than when he undertakes to be a competitor for worldly titles, places, or distinctions of any kind. The more entirely he is withdrawn from the world, the more perfectly he lives above it, and the more completely he is absorbed in the great work of seeking the salvation of men, the more wisely he consults his reputation, as well as his duty and his happiness. Let Lord *Bolingbroke*, and the thousands of nominal christians, who, though they re-

ject the name of infidel, have the same spirit; let them sneer at what he somewhere calls "the sublime passion for saving souls." It IS A SUBLIME PASSION;—the MOST SUBLIME that can actuate the bosom of a mortal. It was this that brought the Saviour from heaven. The highest honour of a minister consists in DOING GOOD. His noblest laurels are CONVERSIONS. The best eulogium that can be pronounced upon him, is that which was passed on a minister in primitive times—*He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people was added to the Lord.*

9. If the leading doctrine of this Lecture be correct, then there is nothing (humanly speaking) more urgently needed for promoting the best interests of the Redeemer's kingdom in the UNITED STATES, than that THE CLERGY, AS A BODY, SHOULD POSSESS A PROPER SPIRIT, AND BE FULLY ROUSED TO THE FAITHFUL DISCHARGE OF THEIR MOMENTOUS DUTIES. When we deliberate about plans for promoting the great cause of truth and piety, we are apt to talk of almost all other means, excepting precisely those which are most radical and essential. We speak much of helping the cause forward by *Funds*, and *Societies*, and annual *Sermons*, and multiplying *auxilliary Associations*, and making eloquent *Addresses* at annual meetings, and a variety of such popular means. Of all these I most cordially approve, as highly useful in their respective places But I will venture to say, we NEED NOTHING SO MUCH, so far as instrumental agency is concerned, as that THE

BODY OF CHRIST'S MINISTERS among us be FULLY AWAKENED to a sense of their obligations and their duties, and EMBARK, WITH HUMBLE DEPENDENCE ON THEIR MASTER, AND WITH THEIR WHOLE HEARTS, IN THEIR APPROPRITAE WORK. Until this shall, in some degree, take place, even supposing all the wealth of the world to be put at the disposal of the church, the work of bringing men under the genuine influence of the gospel will go tardily on. But until this take place, adequate funds for carrying on this great work cannot be furnished; for until ministers be previously imbued with the proper spirit, we must not expect our churches to be roused to that state of spiritual sensibility and exertion, which is indispensable, and which will, one day, be realized. It would be a strange phenomenon, indeed, to see the churches going beyond their leaders in knowledge, feeling, zeal, and effort. As reasonably might we expect to see armies pressing forward to conquest and triumph, when their officers timidly refused to lead them, or were ignobly slumbering in the rear.

How large a number of the ministers of the Presbyterian Church in the *United States* (for I will not speak of any other church) are fully awake, and on the field of battle, properly armed and accoutred, and with the spirit of "good soldiers of Jesus Christ" burning in their bosoms, I dare not venture to estimate. That *all* are not so; that *all* are not engaged, to the extent of their strength, in instructing, rousing, and leading on "the sacramental host" of God from grace to grace, and from victory to victo-

ry, is a melancholy fact too evident to be denied by the most careless observer. When this desirable state of mind and of habit shall be realized with respect to the great body of them, then "the time, even the set time to favour Zion, will have come." Then shall the signal be given for the whole body of our population to come up, willingly and efficiently, *to the help of the Lord against the mighty.* For, that the mass of our professing people have not made higher attainments in christian feeling, and christian effort; that they have not more knowledge of truth; more piety; more zeal; more comprehensive views of the deplorable state of the world; more deep sympathy for the destitute and the perishing; and a more active spirit of benevolent exertion for enlightening the world—I hold to be more owing to a defect of zeal on the part of the clergy themselves, than to any other single cause, next to the native depravity of the human heart. If the great body of our ministers were thoroughly imbued with the apostolick spirit, and animated to a corresponding tone of habitual exertion, we should soon witness glorious days in our beloved country.

10. Finally; in the views which have been taken of this subject, you, my young friends, may find much matter for serious personal application. The great office, the awful office which we have been contemplating;—the office on which so much depends in reference to unnumbered millions,—for soul and body, for time and eternity;—this is the office which you seek;—for which you have come hither to prepare;—to which all your studies and intercourse

here will be, or ought to be, directed. Solemn undertaking! Momentous enterprise! Oh, if you could foresee the unutterable consequences which will result from this enterprise, to yourselves, and to all the multitudes whom you may, in the course of your lives, approach and influence, the present would be an hour of deep solemnity with every one whom I address. May the Lord give you grace to ponder well in your hearts what you are about, and what is before you! May the Lord give you grace to consider seriously the furniture which you need for this mighty work; especially THAT DEEP, ARDENT, ACTIVE PIETY, which lies at the foundation of all other useful furniture. You need, it is true, other attainments, and MUCH of other attainments; but without THIS, you will be of little use as ministers of Christ. Without this, directing, warming, animating, and sanctifying all your other accomplishments, they will be *as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.*

Think, I pray you, what a day it is, in which the Head of the Church has cast your lot! No preceding generation of ministers ever saw such a day as this! Such openings for usefulness; such calls to exertion; such multiplied and extensive *fields whitening to the harvest;* such abundant and potent means for doing good to mankind. To live NOW, is a talent put into your hands, for which you must give an account. Have you an ardour of piety, a tone of moral sentiment, a spirit of enterprise corresponding with this day? If not, give yourselves no rest till you in some good measure attain them all. If an ancient heathen rhetorician, in giving directions

for the attainment of the "sublime," in writing, could say—"Spare no labour to educate your soul to grandeur, and to impregnate it with great and generous ideas;" much more may the same language be addressed to a candidate for the gospel ministry, in the present stage of the Church's progress. Take unceasing pains to get large views of ministerial furniture, ministerial duty, and ministerial success. Strive to "educate your souls to grandeur" of conception, and grandeur of wishes, and hopes, and enterprise for the moral benefit of your fellow men. Aim high. Let no petty plans satisfy you, either as to acquirement or exertion. Every one of you, however humble his talents, if really disposed to make the most of what God has given him, might cause his influence to be felt to the ends of the earth.

Think, further, what a weight of responsibility, if you live to sustain it, will soon devolve upon you. When I see more than a hundred theological students before me, amounting to nearly a thirteenth part of the whole number of our ministry; and recollect that, in a little time, the reins of ecclesiastical administration will drop from the hands of those who now bear them,—and who, alas! have so much reason to mourn over the defective manner in which they have borne them;—and that a large part of the weighty trust will devolve on YOU, I can scarcely express my emotions. Is it so, my young friends, that this beloved Church; this truly primitive and apostolick Church; this Church for which our fathers have prayed and laboured so much; this Church, which, though repeatedly involved in the flame of contro-

versy and trial, yet, like the "burning bush" at *Horeb*, has not been "consumed," but has been mercifully brought forth more thrifty and flourishing; this Church, in the future destiny of which the peace, edification, and eternal welfare of so many myriads are involved;—is soon to be committed, under God, to YOUR MANAGEMENT, associated with those who, in other places, are, like yourselves, training up for the work? And is it true that so much, under God, depends upon your spirit, attainments, and character? that what YOU shall be, fifteen or twenty years hence, THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH WILL BE? O, then, *gird up the loins of your minds; be sober and watch unto prayer.* Let a sense of your incalculable responsibility daily rest upon you. Let it impel you in your studies, give new fervour to your devotions, and impart a deeper tone of solemnity to all your intercourse, both with one another, and with all around you. Remember, in going out, and in coming in, in sitting down and in rising up, that you are consecrated men, bound to live and to die for the Church of God. Cultivate a deep and habitual spirit of prayer. Covet earnestly the best gifts; and shrink from no labour, either in study or in self-denial, that will prepare you to perform with more efficiency your Master's work. Consider no sacrifice as too great for the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom. Set up no banner, in any case, but that of Christ. Let all carnal ambition, pride, envy, contention, and unhallowed emulation be put away from among you. Be always ready to surrender every personal feeling for the sake of brotherly love and edification. Cher-

ish more and more the feelings of a holy brotherhood, pledged to Christ, and to one another by indissoluble ties. Remember that, united, you will stand, and by the spirit and strength of Christ, can do all things; but that, divided, you must fall; and that in every fall of the christian ministry, the cause of the Redeemer bleeds and mourns. Resolve, that, if the Church be corrupted with error, agitated by controversy, or torn by schism, the sin shall not lie at YOUR DOOR. If her walls be broken down, by folly or wickedness, see that YOU be found in the breach, fighting and praying for her restoration. And if ever a time should come in which you can do nothing more, at least be found *weeping between the porch and the altar, saying, Spare thy people, O Lord, bless thy heritage, save them, and lift them up for ever!* But, if YOU are faithful, my young friends, such a time will never come. Yes, if only the little band, now seated within the sound of my voice, should all happily prove to be animated with the spirit of the primitive heralds of the cross, there is no presumption in saying, that, you alone, under God, would form a pledge to our beloved Church of her spiritual prosperity.

The God of all grace grant that you may act a part more worthy of the sacred office than we, who have preceded you, have ever done! May He preside over your studies; endow you with all those gifts and graces which will fit you for the faithful performance of his great work; and form you to be "chosen vessels" for building up his Church, and bearing the treasures of his love to a dark and miserable world: and to his name be the glory! Amen!

NOTE.

[Page 6.]

A few remarks on the distinction between the "*Clergy*" and the "*Laity*," which it was not convenient to introduce into the body of the Lecture, it is deemed proper to present in this place.

It is impossible to read the Acts of the Apostles, and the several Epistles, especially those to *Timothy* and *Titus*; and to examine, in connexion with these, the writings of the "Apostolick Fathers," without perceiving that the distinction between ministers of religion and private christians, was clearly made, from the very origin of the christian church, and uniformly maintained. That the terms, "*clergy*" and "*laity*" were not used at first, is of no importance in any view; since the distinction intended to be expressed by them, has undoubtedly and uniformly existed from the commencement of the New Testament dispensation to the present day. The titles of "Rulers" in the house of God;—"Ambassadors of Christ;"—"Stewards of the Mysteries of God;" "Bishops, Elders, Shepherds, Ministers," &c., as distinguished from those to whom they ministered, are so familiar to all readers of the New Testament, that further elucidation of that point is altogether unnecessary.

The word κληρος, properly signifies a *lot*. And as the land of *Canaan* was divided among the Israelites *by lot*, the word, in process of time, came to signify *an inheritance*. In this figurative, or secondary sense, the term is evidently employed in 1 Peter v. 3. Under the Old Testament dispensation, the peculiar people of God were called, (Septuagint translation,) his κληρος, or *inheritance*. Of this we have examples in *Deuteronomy* iv. 20, and ix. 29. The term, in both these passages, is manifestly applied to the whole body of the nation of Israel, as God's inheritance, or peculiar people. *Clemens Romanus*, one of the "Apostolick Fathers," speaking of the Jewish

economy, and having occasion to distinguish between the priests and the common people, calls the latter λαικοι. *Clemens Alexandrinus*, toward the close of the second century, speaks of the apostle *John*, as having set apart such persons for "clergymen," (κληροι) as were signified to him by the Holy Ghost. And in the writings of *Tertullian*, *Origen*, and *Cyprian*, the terms "clergy" and "laity" occur with a frequency which shows that they were then in familiar use. *Jerome* observes, that ministers are called *Clerici*, either because they are peculiarly the lot and portion of the Lord; or because the Lord is *their* lot, that is, their inheritance. Hence the learned and pious Father takes occasion to infer, "That he who is God's portion, ought so to exhibit himself, that he may be truly said to possess God, and to be possessed by Him." *Epist.* 2. *ad Nepotian.* 5. Others have thought, that, in giving this title, some regard was had to the ancient custom of electing persons into sacred offices *by lot*.

And as we have abundant evidence that ecclesiastical men were familiarly called *Clerici*, or "Clergymen," from the second century; so we have the same evidence that this term was employed to designate *all* ecclesiastical men. That is, all persons who had any public employment in the church, were called by the common name of *Clerici*, or "Clergymen." It was applied, continually, to *Elders* and *Deacons*, as well as to *Bishops* or *Pastors*. Nay, in the third century, when not only Prelacy had crept in, and obtained a general prevalence; but when the same spirit of innovation had also brought in a number of inferior orders, such as *Sub-deacons*, *Readers*, *Acolyths*, &c., these inferior orders were all styled *Clerici*. *Cyprian*, speaking of a Sub-deacon, and also of a Reader, calls them both *Clerici*. The ordination of such persons (for it seems they were formally ordained) he calls *Ordinationes Clericæ;* and the letters which he transmitted by them, he styles *Literæ Clericæ*. The same fact may be clearly established from the writings of *Ambrose*, *Hilary*, and *Epiphanius*, and from the canons of the Council of *Nice*. Indeed there seems reason to believe, that, in the fourth and fifth centuries, and subsequently, the title of *Clerici* was not only given to all the inferior orders of ecclesiastical men, but was more frequently applied to them than to their superiors: who were generally addressed by their

more distinctive titles. Those who recollect that learning, during the dark ages, was chiefly confined to the clergy; that few, excepting persons of that profession, were able to read and write; and that the whimsical privilege, commonly called "*benefit of clergy*," grew out of the rare accomplishment of being able to read;—will be at no loss to trace the etymology of the word *clerk* (*clericus*) or secretary, to designate one who officiates as the reader and writer of a public body.

To distinguish the mass of private christians from the clergy, they were designated by several names. They were sometimes called λαικοι, *laici*, laymen, from λαος, *populus*; sometimes ιδιωται, "private men," from ιδιος, *privatus* (see Acts iv. 13.); sometimes βιωτικοι, "seculars," from βιος, which signifies a secular life. Soon after the apostolick age, common christians were frequently called ανδρες εκκλησιαστικοι — "men of the church"—that is, persons not belonging either to Jewish synagogues, or heathen temples, or heretical bodies, but *members of the church of Christ*. Afterwards, however, the title, *Ecclesiasticks*, became gradually appropriated to persons *in office* in the church. See *Stephani Thesaurus*. BINGHAM'S *Origines Ecclesiasticæ*, B. I.